

BAD ROMANCE:
A QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS ON LOVE AS REPRESENTED
ACROSS POPULAR MUSIC GENRES

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Unrealistic representations of love have rarely been studied across popular music genres. The lyrics of the top songs in five of the most popular genres (Country, Hip Hop/R&B, Pop, Rap, and Rock) during the periods of 1991-1995 and 2011-2015 were coded for specific love myths. The results of the study show that the overall average of love myths found in popular music genres remain consistent over time. More specifically, based on the amount of myths per song, there was an average of .7056 myths per song in the 1990s and an average of .7504 myths per song in the 2010s. However, there are significant changes in mythical content over time and genre. This research should serve as a foundation to further study the prevalence and influence of love myths of popular music throughout both time and genre.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“If music be the food of love, play on.” –William Shakespeare

Music and love seem to go seamlessly hand in hand. The emotion of romance strung together with the strong feelings expressed in music is a connection that has existed arguably as long as the concept of music. Similar to love regularly being a topic brought up in conversation by family, friends, and on occasion complete strangers at the super market, love has always been a staple in popular music as well. “Popular music has an obsession with love...Pop songs vivisect relationships. They are the primary source of love education for adolescents. The airwaves have become troubadours.” (Ackerman, 1994, 264). Historically speaking, songs have a rich connection with both romance and relationships. “A language of pure emotion, music heightens courtship, and most cultures include music in their mating rituals.” (Ackerman, 1994, 264).

While a longstanding relationship between music and love has existed, music itself has changed throughout the years.

Now that sex is freely available, and inhibition and denial have given way to frankness, songs have changed from coy, romantic euphemisms to yowls of blunt desire. The lyrics have gotten sexier, even raunchy at times, and simple lamentation has turned into hard truths and stark reality” (Ackerman, 1994, 265).

Regardless of genre or whether or not the song is inherently about love, popular music plays a critical role in perpetuating traditional myths surrounding love (Galician, 2004).

Using Cultivation Theory by George Gerbner and Love Myths and Prescriptions by Mary Lou Galician, as well as an understanding of previous literature, this paper analyzes the five most popular music genres to illustrate popular music’s role of enabling unrealistic

ideas of romance and serves to extend the understanding of the influential role of media in romance.

SIGNIFICANCE

With music as storyteller- what stories are we learning from popular music? What are we hearing over and over again? According to love psychologist Robert Sternberg, “Conceptions of love are important to cultures because they implicitly define what is appropriate and desirable in human relations” (Sternberg, 1998, 68). But where are we learning these conceptions of love? One of the ways we learn social behavior is through media. “Many social critics, relationship therapists, and popular books about coupleship have accused the mass media of brainwashing consumers with portrayals of romanticized love that is unattainable as a goal and unhealthy as a model...” (Galician, 2004, 13). Are these unhealthy and unrealistic love myths between represented and re-presented in popular music? This paper serves to examine not only the presence of these myths, but also the repetitious nature and type of messaging in both today’s music and music from 20 years ago. This study will examine the frequency of love myths in different genres by content analyzing lyrics in songs. Additionally, this analysis will investigate if there is a relationship between types of music and types of myth.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK & LITERATURE REVIEW

WHAT IS LOVE?

First, we need establish a working definition of love. Love means different things to different people and there are a number of variations of love. The love of a parent, the love of a friend, the love of a child, the love of a partner, the love of a sport, and the love of anything at all have potential to be diverse. The problem with conceptualizing love is that it is used in an astounding array of situations to describe an enormous range of attitudes, feelings, emotions, and behaviors toward objects and people (Bersheid, 2006, 172). Due to the fact that love has more than one meaning, it stands to reason that there can then be no singular definition of love. The Greeks, for example, used five different definitions of love: *agape* (deep, unconditional love), *philia* (brotherly love), *storge* (affection/family love), *platonic* (nonsexual, friendship), and *eros* (passionate love) (Horstman, 2012, 4). If the term love can be used in a variety of ways, it should come as no surprise that there are a number of different theories, examples, and analyses of love.

The study of the love has grown dramatically in the last 50 years, and the theories are vast. From biological to behavioral theories, and evolutionary views to cultural systems, the concept of love can be explained in a variety of different ways. From an evolutionary view, love is simply a base set of decision biases involving two main categories: reproduction and survival (Kenrick, 2006, 16). According to a behavioral model, love is understood as emotional attachment, with caregiving and sex falling into that category (Shaver & Mikulincer, 2006). In addition, there is also a prototypical analysis of love, which is used to develop and examine categorizations in order to catalog

the different forms of love to create a conceptual framework (Weis, 2006, 320).

Regardless of which theoretical concept one adopts, most would agree that, “Everywhere people sing for love, pray for love, work for love, live for love, kill for love, and die for love. Even where marriages are arranged, spouses often fall in love. Nothing will extinguish the human drive to love” (Fisher, 2006a, 107).

According to biological anthropologist, Helen Fisher, PhD, the rudimentary human emotions and stimuli to love result from specific systems of neural activity. There are three brain systems for love: lust, attraction, and attachment (Fisher, 2006b). Furthermore, according to Fisher, anthropologists have never found a society that did not have some form of romantic love (Fisher, 2006b).

For the purpose of this study, I will be adopting the triangular theory of love by psychologist Robert J. Sternberg, PhD, as the basis of realistic love. Sternberg attests that there are three components involved in love. In no particular order, the first component is intimacy, which is composed of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness (Sternberg, 1998, 6). According to Sternberg, there are at least ten elements included in the category of intimacy. They are: desiring to promote the welfare of the loved one, experiencing happiness with the loved one, holding the loved one in high regard, being able to count on the loved one in times of need, having mutual understanding with the loved one, sharing oneself and one’s possession with the loved one, receiving emotional support from the loved one, giving emotional support to the loved one, communicating intimately with the loved one, and valuing the loved one (Sternberg, 1998).

The second element of love is passion, composed of romance, physical attraction, and sex. “Passion is largely the expression of desires and needs—such as for self-esteem,

nurturance, affiliation, dominance, submission, and sexual fulfillment” (Sternberg, 1998, 9). The third and final component of love is composed of two aspects: short-term and long-term, and is identified as decision/commitment. The short-term feature refers to the decision to love a particular other and the long-term feature refers to the commitment to continue that love (Sternberg, 1998, 11).

These three elements are not to be understood as stand-alone components, but as parts of a puzzle that make up a larger piece of what is considered healthy or unhealthy love. Using a combination of any of these three components (or lack thereof), there are eight possible kinds of love: non-love (absence of all three components), friendship/liking (intimacy only), infatuated love (passion only), empty love (commitment only), romantic love (intimacy and passion), companionate love (intimacy and commitment), fatuous love (passion and commitment), and consummate love (inclusion of all three components) (Sternberg, 2006).

MEDIA

Media play a part in shaping relationship expectations and roles. One of the ways is through Cultivation Theory, developed by George Gerbner in the 1960s. Cultivation theory was born out of a larger three-part research project called Cultural Indicators that was aimed at producing an integrated approach to studying television- its policies, programs, and impacts (Morgan, Shanahan, & Signorielli, 2009).

Using this three-pronged research strategy, Gerbner studied the various facets of television- from production to content to audience. The strategy of the Cultural Indicators project included institutional process analysis, message system analysis, and

cultivation analysis (Morgan et al., 2009). Institutional process analysis focuses on the production of mass media- the who, how, what, and why of media messages. Message system analysis involves “identifying the most recurrent, stable, and overarching patterns of television content” (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 2002, 199). Lastly, cultivation analysis relates to how these mass-distributed, repetitive messages affect audiences.

In the simplest terms, Cultivation Theory suggests a relationship between heavy television viewing and people’s worldview. According to Gerbner, television exists as storyteller, which presents “a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right.” (Griffin, 2006, 385). The television acts as a relatively clear, centralized system of images and messages penetrating into every home (Gerbner et al., 2002, 193). From it, audiences starting as young as infancy are taught repetitive “lessons” that are likely to serve as the foundation for how they see the world (Gerbner et al., 2002, 203). As such, television becomes a significant source of values, ideologies, and beliefs.

According to Cultivation Theory, exposure is absolutely critical to the cultivation process.

Television viewing cultivates ways of seeing the world—those who spend more time “living” in the world of television are more likely to see the “real world” in terms of the images, values, portrayals, and ideologies that emerge through the lens of television. (Morgan et al., 2009, 35).

In addition to time spent glued to the television set, there also exists variations in the cultivation process itself. These include, but are not limited to, parental co-viewing, children who are more integrated into cohesive peer or family groups, direct experience,

mainstreaming, and resonance (Gerbner et al., 2002). The final two variations are the basis for Cultivation Theory.

There are two main concepts that are central to understanding both Gerbner's work and the research of this paper: 1. mainstreaming and 2. resonance. "Mainstreaming is Gerbner's word to describe the process of 'blurring, blending, and bending' that those with heavy viewing habits undergo" (Griffin, 2006, 389). "The mainstream can be thought of as a relative commonality of outlooks and values that heavy exposure to the television world tends to cultivate" (Gerbner et al., 2002, 201).

In terms of resonance, Gerbner claims that other television viewers become more uneasy through the process of resonance. According to Cultivation Theory, "a repeated symbolic portrayal on the TV screen can cause the viewer to replay the real-life experience over and over in his or her mind" (Griffin, 2006, 391). This is a phenomenon we have called resonance, in which everyday reality and television provide a "double-dose" or messages that "resonate" and amplify cultivation (Gerbner et al., 2002, 200).

The final point of Cultivation Theory to keep in mind is that media cultivation does not translate directly into "media effects." Cultivation is not an imposing one-way process, but rather a transactional process with both give and take. Gerbner stresses the importance of cultivation as a "continual, dynamic, ongoing process of interaction among messages and contexts" (Gerbner et al., 2002, 198). With this in mind, Gerbner stresses that, "television neither simply "creates" nor "reflects" images, opinions, and beliefs. Rather, it is an integral aspect of a dynamic process" (Gerbner et al., 2002, 197).

The early research of Cultivation Theory, as well as the majority of research focused on this theory, is linked to violence. "Specifically, Gerbner suggests that

exposure to vast amounts of symbolic violence on the screen conditions viewers to view the world as a mean and scary place” (Griffin, 2006, 384). However, some have examined other media in light of this theory. Ackerman, for example, echoes Gerbner and his ideas on storytelling:

In pop songs we share our myths and ideals about love. In a tough, mercantile way, they warn us what love may cost. But they also alert us to what grandeur it may bring. They offer advice on whom to love, how to know if it’s the real thing, what to do if one’s betrayed, how to cope if love disintegrates. We are constantly in love, looking for love, losing love, or hurt by love; in short, we are ‘Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered.’ Our songs say it all. (1994, 264).

While Gerbner viewed television as storyteller, for the purpose of this paper, music will be viewed as storyteller. Rather than violence, this study focuses on the perpetuation of Galician’s love myths. In place of the medium of television, this study analyzes songs, which can be argued as having both similar and different traits from television, and specifically viewed as an effective storyteller in today’s earbuds generation. Drawing upon the foundations of Cultivation Theory, this study investigates the love myths in popular music genre because hearing these love myths repeatedly cultivates unrealistic ideas and expectations in romantic and sexual relationships.

MUSIC

THE BEGINNING OF MUSIC

Music is used in schools, homes, churches, and communities. It is used for special occasions, politics, business, military, healthcare, and physical activities. But where did it come from and how did it get here? “Evidence of early musical activity is found in poetry, myths, and legends, as well as in artifacts and primitive paintings that portray instruments and performers” (Wetzel, 2012, 7). In regards to music history,

music played a fairly large role in early civilizations. It's important to note that some music historians and anthropologists argue that music is older than language itself and was used before words were developed (Wetzel, 2012, 8).

While music's role in civilizations was arguably large, another important point is that it was not necessarily bound to their survival. "Music is not essential to physical survival but artifacts from prehistoric times suggest its presence among human species in their more primal phases" (Wetzel, 2012, 2). For early civilizations, music was a way to express emotions. Many anthropologists suggest that "emotions are the most distinguishing feature of the human race, and for much of our early human history were expressed largely through some type of music" (Wetzel, 2012, 12).

For example, music played a popular role in the ancient Egyptian civilization. "Visitors often commented on the abundance of music, dance, storytelling, and song" (Ackerman, 1994, 7). Romantic love was often a topic of choice of writers and musicians. Lyric poetry (a song accompanied by the lyre) and a variety of dance became very popular (Ackerman, 1994, 7). "Egyptologists have found fifty-five anonymous love poems, on papyri and vases, dating back to around 1300 B.C. Certainly there were poems written earlier; but papyri and vases are extremely perishable" (Ackerman, 1994, 10).

From early civilizations, to the many references to music found in the Old Testament of the Bible, to the Holy Roman Empire and beyond, the human species has been stringing notes together for a specific purpose. However, it is believed that the creation and development of secular songs really began to take flight around the time of the Holy Roman Empire (Wetzel, 2012, 45). Troubadours were, in large part, to thank

for this shift since they created many of the earliest love songs in the West (Wetzel, 2012, 46). Troubadours were popular from the late 11th to the late 13th century and were known for their poetic and lyrical prowess (Troubadour, 2015). However, love songs were not the only secular songs during this time.

Songs truly began to take their shape and the inspiration for song was endless. Wherever song is found, it taps into global expression by reference to topics of broad interest, especially common emotional or sentimental feelings...Darker emotions, such as loss through death, as well as inspirational songs about heroic deeds, are common...However, the most common subject of songs through the centuries has been about some manifestation of romantic love (Wetzel, 2012, 45).

One thing that has clearly not changed since the influence of secular song is the topic of love.

POPULARITY OF MUSIC

Music in the car; music on the eight-speaker home entertainment center; music at concerts and weekend parties; music in the background at the office and in the kids' rooms as they're doing homework; and, most ubiquitously, music on iPods played not only for one's own pleasure but downloaded and shared with multiple friends. It's not hard to find people who don't enjoy reading, or the theater, or even television. It is hard to find people of any age who don't enjoy music and who don't enjoy talking about it. (Farber, 2007, 133).

Music really is all around us- from the catchy tune on the television commercial, to the powerful ballad in the critically-acclaimed movie, to the hold music during a telephone call. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, it's nearly impossible to go a day in society without hearing some form of musical expression. While there are many ways to listen to music, the radio is still among one of the most popular. There were approximately 10,300 commercial radio stations across the United States and 99 percent of American households owned a minimum of one radio in the year 2000 (Bonds, 2006, 516).

According to research conducted by Rideout, Foehr, and Roberts, music continues to be one of the most sought after forms of media among adolescents. Second to watching television, the popularity of listening to music among 8- to 18-year-olds has not changed in the past five or even 10 years (2010, 28). Young people spent an average of 2 hours and 19 minutes listening to music and an additional 12 minutes with other audio – this is 47 minutes more than was spent with music and other audio five years ago (Rideout et al., 2010, 28). Mp3 players and cell phones have made the shift to portable music even easier than previously used CD players and cassette players. Moreover, accessibility to music has increased with mobile platforms such as iTunes, Pandora, Amazon, Google, and more. With a heavy youth following, it should come as no surprise that rock lyrics are most often quoted than other types of yearbook quotes in yearbooks of high school and college students (Farber, 2007, 137).

While there have been many technological advances and changes in the way music is consumed, music remains an important staple in entertainment. According to the Music 360 2014 year-end study by the Nielsen Company, 93% of the U.S. population listens to music and spends more than 25 hours listening each week, landing music at the top form of entertainment (Nielsen Company, 2014). For the year 2015, listening figures remained nearly the same as 2014, but there were significant changes in access to music (Nielsen Company, 2015). Although recorded music sales fell in 2015, both smartphone listening and live music (streaming and in-person) soared (Nielsen Company, 2015).

MUSIC AS STORYTELLER

From lullabies as babies, to children's songs in kindergarten, to adolescent songs like the Periodic Table Song in high school, music can be used as an educational tool at any age. It can teach facts, like naming all of the countries in the United States, or it can be used to educate the audience on social behavior. At any period of life, music can always be used as storyteller. "From cradle to grave we learn many important messages about what it means to be human and how to behave in certain situations through the music we hear" (Hodges & Sebald, 2011, 324). Ultimately, music serves to teach children social behaviors. "These mass media disseminate messages that inform us, entertain us, and persuade us. They also transmit culture and socialize us...A society's values and beliefs reside in these stories, which help define our realities" (Galician, 2004, 78).

As children grow, music serves to aid in the transition into adulthood. Not only are songs used as an expression of appropriate behavior, but they can also be used by adults to express their condemnation of inappropriate behavior through songs of protest (Hodges & Sebald, 2011, 63). Furthermore, music plays a critical role in our lives because it "reinforces, heightens, and gathers our shared feelings and experiences" (Hodges & Sebald, 2011, 68). With the popularity of music, in addition to it housing our shared feelings and experiences, this study investigates exposure to these myths. While there may be variations on the outlook, both history and research are at the foundation of Galician's love myths.

MUSIC & LOVE

Most people have experienced the power of music firsthand - we have experienced heightened emotion as we stand and hear the bride's processional at a wedding, we get excited when we hear the notes of a fight song for our school or alma mater, and some are even overcome with emotion with the singing of the national anthem. Music has a way to touch our emotions and heighten our experiences in a way that words simply cannot.

According to *The Scientific American Book of Love, Sex, and the Brain*, love and music have an even deeper connection. The parts of your brain that light up when you are in love or sexually aroused are the same ones triggered by heroin and music (Horstman, 2012, 90). The old saying "sex, drugs, and rock and roll" may have been grounded in more truth than we originally thought.

Music has the power to heighten human emotions, as well as illustrate our love. "From the singing of lullabies to the crooning of love ballads, from the use of funeral dirges and wedding songs, music is a powerful means of communicating love from one to another" (Hodges & Sebald, 2011, 16). As young adults, songs are used as a means to communicate love, as well as frame and backdrop their relationships. "Music also plays an important role in the courtship of young adults; it is part of their environment whether they are in the car, at the movies, dancing, or spending a quiet evening together" (Hodges & Sebald, 2011, 317).

"Love has long been a staple in the American song tradition" (Jordan, 2006, xviii). But it wasn't until the 1960s when songs about love made a dramatic shift (Farber, 2007). The influence of feminism, as well as a changing political and social

environment, shifted views on both love and sex. “Singer-songwriters chronicled the unfolding drama and when they spoke of love it was in the most personal way. Detached, formulaic love songs now seemed anemic...” (Jordan, 2006, xix). Songwriters became more comfortable with lyrics that explicitly expressed their personal feelings about relationships. “Love, in life and songs, became more complicated, uncertain, and political. As Dylan noted with perfect irony in his (1967) song with the same title as this phrase, ‘love is just a 4-letter word’” (Farber, 2007, 10). Furthermore, according to Dukes, Bisel, Borega, Lobato, and Owens (2003), the most concentrated amount of sex words in lyrics between 1958 to 1998 were delivered by women during the sexual liberation of the 1960s and 1970s, according to their sex word index that accounts for differences in song lengths throughout the years of their study (649).

While song is a popular storyteller, those stories are not always all they are cracked up to be. According to Farber, “A truth about love not often noted in rock lyrics is that for love to last, it takes endless negotiation and compromise” (2007, 14). Echoing those sentiments is psychologist Robert Sternberg: “It’s a difficult task to find anything in the media that has much to teach us about the realities of love” (Cupids Arrow, 1996, 76). Keeping this in mind, let’s shift our gaze to the ever-enchanted myths of love that are causing the realities of love to lose out on representation.

MYTHS

Simply defined, myths are stories that represent traditions and beliefs of all cultures. From traveling Greek poets to troubadours, the act of storytelling is a cornerstone for most societies as a way of preserving history and passing on traditions

and beliefs. With the growing reliance on technology as well as vast technological advances, the medium of the storyteller has shifted, and the need for storytelling remains.

Mythologist Joseph Campbell believed that myths serve four main functions. He concluded that they are: 1. metaphysical; 2. cosmological; 3. sociological; and 4. pedagogical (Campbell, 2007). Myths are metaphysical in that there is more going on than meets the eye; they are part of a larger picture. They stimulate a sense of awe and understanding that remains a mystery below the surface of what's going on in the world. Myths are also cosmological because they present the universe and our relationship to it. Cosmology in myth relates directly to our knowledge and experiences in relation to the larger universe. Third, myths also support the moral order of society, and therefore are sociological. Finally, and possibly most critical in terms of this paper, myths are pedagogical; they function as a form of education.

According to French theorist Roland Barthes, myth has a double function: “it points out and it notifies, it makes us understand something and it imposes it on us” (Barthes, 1984, 5). But Barthes was less concerned with the content of myths and more concerned with how mythical meaning itself is conveyed (Rivière, 2010, 22). To Barthes, “myth is a system of communication, that it is a message. This allows one to perceive that myth cannot possibly be an object, a concept, or an idea; it is a mode of signification, a form” (Barthes, 1984, 1). Barthes warned that the danger with myths is that they serve to support the dominant ideology of society and support the status quo.

It includes everything that does not contradict current opinion, and is therefore accepted as natural. It is also what gives to the narrative the appearance of truth or reality, its ‘verisimilitude’. In this sense, it has nothing to do with what is true or possible but about what people believe to be true or possible at a particular time (Rivière, 2010, 48).

For Barthes, myths worked best with incomplete images with just enough human meaning for people to believe it.

Because the framework for this paper rests on the theory of psychologist Mary-Lou Galician, the working definition of myth will come from her: “In fact, myths are the stories that determine a society’s perspectives about the world, about themselves, about what behaviors and approaches have meaning or value *beyond* the real” (Galician, 2004, 34). According to Galician, myths and socialization are deeply intertwined.

“Socialization is the process whereby individuals are made aware of the behavior that others expect of them regarding the norms, values, and culture of their society,” and a major agent of socialization is the mass media (Galician, 2004, 82).

While myths serve important functions in society, Campbell notes that myths may not always be what they seem and their history is not one that can even be traced back to reality on certain levels. In fact, some of the archetypes attributed to myths may not have been founded on any realistic experience at all, but rather form out of the human psyche itself (Campbell, 2007, 18). Furthermore, Barthes points out that, “What the world supplies to myth is an historical reality, defined, even if this goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality” (Barthes, 1984, 16). Factual basis is not the only thing to consider when studying myths. Why do some myths last for centuries and others fade into nothing? The answer depends on the storytellers. For example, during the Renaissance, the European poets, artists, and philosophers “carried not the West alone, but mankind, into the new chapter of civilization, where every mythological theme of the past that is not transmuted into poetry is doomed to become simply provincial relic”

(Campbell, 2007, 27). While myths are valuable to society, we must recognize that some are not easily traced back to history (if at all), nor are they eternal. However, many of the love myths in this paper have withstood the test of time.

Before we examine love myths in popular culture with the help of popular music genres, we must first recognize that there is a long history of these particular myths. The artists of these songs are not constructing these concepts from scratch – quite the opposite. Rather, these songs are representing and re-presenting well-known experiences that resonate with the audience. As stated by Galician, “Many of the myths about sex, love, and romance that influence us to adopt idealistic and unattainable models for our actual behavior originated with the ancient Greeks” (2004, 50).

So are we drawn to love stories because of their ancient foundations? Maybe. The bigger question is why are we drawn to myths at all – love or otherwise? According to Galician, there are many reasons these myths are attractive. First, these myths are *sometimes* true, laying the foundation for people to think that they are *normally* true. Second, they are also basic and oversimplified. Often they are not complicated concepts with hard to follow premises. Last, these love myths are inclusive, meaning that the listener believes that the myth can speak directly to him or her – that it’s relevant, relatable, and useful (2004, 70). Regardless of what particular reason draws people to follow myths, one thing is for certain – these love myths have stood the test of time and show no evidence that they are going anywhere soon, according to several longitudinal studies of Galician’s myths (Asenas, 2007; Bader, 2007; Bramlett-Solomon, 2007; Engstrom, 2007; Hall, 2007; Johnson, 2007).

While these ageless myths have changed little, according to Sternberg, “What has changed, however, is how these stories play out in day-to-day living, as well as the popularity of some stories compared with others” (1998, 5). Some myths last longer and are stronger than others. With this understanding, Galician’s 12 Love Myths and Prescriptions will provide a basis for this study. Galician’s theory developed from her own personal love story, the effects of mass media portrayals on expectations and satisfactions of romantic love, and the need for mass media literacy regarding love, sex, and romance in the media (Galician, 2004, 4).

Based on fictitious, romanticized ideas regarding romance perpetuated in the media, Galician provides both the myths and prescriptions to help people take notice of what is being presented and help resolve these impossible standards. For the purpose of this particular study, I will only focus on the myths, and not the prescriptions. The 12 myths are:

1. Your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can ultimately separate you;
2. There’s such a thing as “love at first sight”;
3. Your true soul mate should KNOW what you’re thinking or feeling (without your having to tell);
4. If your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful;
5. To attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model or a centerfold;
6. The man should NOT be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman;
7. The love of a good and faithful true woman can change a man from a “beast” into a “prince”;
8. Bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately;
9. All you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values;
10. The right mate “completes you,” filling your needs and making your dreams come true;
11. In real life, actors and actresses are often very much like the romantic characters they portray;
- and 12. Since mass media portrayals of romance aren’t “real,” they don’t really affect you (2004).

Myths 1, 3, and 10 are all connected by the concept that there is one and only perfect partner. Myth 1 has origins in Greece with the Platonic ideal that the gods separated you from your other half and the rest of your life will be spent in hopes of

finding that missing half (Galician, 2004, 120). The problem with waiting for your one-and-only true love is that you potentially miss a number of qualified candidates while waiting on “destiny” (Galician, 2004, 124). According to Myth 3, words are unnecessary if you are with your true one-and-only love. Galician asserts, “Mind-readers function only in circuses – and romance novels, which feed our fantasy of having a perfect relationship without really working at it” (Galician, 2004, 140). Unfortunately, in the media production communication portrayals are few and far between—we are either shown the power of mind-reading or total cluelessness when it comes to romantic narratives (Galician, 2004, 139).

Myth 10 focuses on the perfect person completing you. “Intellectually, most of us realize that no one else can make us happy or sad, but in our heart we don’t always accept that” (Galician, 2004, 202). According to Galician, love songs are leading culprits of this myth and songs like “Because You Love Me,” “All of My Life,” and “How Can I Live Without You,” are all prime examples for fostering the idea that one needs to find a partner to be saved, rescued, completed, and happy (2004, 207). In reality, “using your partner as a completer, fixer, rescuer (someone from whom you ‘take’ or ‘get’) is not romance – it’s robbery!” (Galician, 2004, 207).

Myth 2 originates from the classical character Cupid and his mischievous arrow. The Greek god of love, Eros, as well as the Indian god of desire, Kama, also share in Cupid’s ability to cause humans to fall in love (Galician, 2004, 37). The belief in these gods promotes the idea of divine causation, or that falling in love is out of our control. “It’s true that love at first sight (and even at repeated sight) is usually a physical experience that we perceive and describe as ‘beyond our control’” (Galician, 2004, 128).

In reality, the physical excitement that can occur during our first sight of certain individuals we find appealing is best characterized as lust, not love (Galician, 2004, 129). While attraction can occur in a moment, realistic romance takes time and is a choice we make – not something we “fall” into or are powerless against (Galician, 2004, 131).

Myth 4 deals with unrealistic sexual depictions in the media. While magazines like Playboy, Maxim, and Cosmo are primary culprits of unrealistic sexual ideals, song lyrics easily fall into this category, as well (Galician, 2004, 146). “Combined with their pulsating rhythms and mood-inducing musical patterns, popular song lyrics can have a great impact on listeners, who tend to be young” (Galician, 2004, 147). The reality is, “as with all intimacy, genuinely good sex takes time, trust, and togetherness,” and sex is just one of three elements of love (Galician, 2004, 149).

Myths 5 and 7 are linked in their love of the beautiful. Myth 5, specifically, addresses the issue of ideal beauty fantasies in women. There is a conception of beauty that is promoted in the media that is unachievable by most normal people (Galician, 2004, 155). These unrealistic pictures and descriptions of perfect women can have both attitudinal and behavioral effects on men and their relationships because real women can’t measure up to these unrealistic representations (Galician, 2004, 154). Galician argues that these messages actually undermine our selves.

There’s nothing wrong with trying to improve our appearance and enhance our health. In fact, those are worthy goals. However, when the standards are actually far beyond the norm, we must stop and interrogate the media messages that undermine our self-esteem (2004, 155).

While myth 7 is related to myth 5 in valuing beauty, myth 7 also connects to myth 6 and 10 by their rescue fantasy themes. Myth 6 attests that the man cannot be shorter, weaker, poorer, or less successful than the woman. According to Galician’s comparative

study of baby boomers and generation Xers, the most stereotypical view of myth 6 was held by heavy viewers of music videos (2004, 164). Music videos are not the only place this myth is found – the idea of male superiority is rampant in the mass media. This myth, “dominates nearly every romance novel, every magazine illustration and ad, every television show (including event news anchor ‘couple’) and commercial, and every romantic action movie (Galician, 2004, 166). While it’s dehumanizing to view women as objects (myth 5), it is also dehumanizing to view men as a meal-ticket or security guard (Galician, 2004, 165).

Myth 7 addresses the unrealistic idea if you are the right partner, you will be able to change your counterpart. The reality is that people can and do change, but it likely has less to do with their partners and more to do with themselves. In real life, according to Galician, “people can and do change for the better, but only if and when they themselves choose to do so and make a serious, concerted effort demonstrated in long-term behavior – *not* merely because their partner is good and wonderful” (2004, 178). Not only do the dangers of this myth set unrealistic expectations and roles for both the “fixer” and the “fixee,” it also underlies domestic violence (Galician, 2004, 182).

Myths 8 and 9 find commonalities in the barriers and battles of and for love. One possible reason for the perpetuation of these myths is that we know that both conflict sells and sex sells (Galician, 2004, 187). The reality is that, due to this myth, some couples misinterpret their own conflicts as a sign of love or confuse the emotions stimulated by conflict with emotions of passion (Galician, 2004, 186). If fighting means true love, then having very different values (to fight over) should not matter. According to myth 9, all you need is love, so it does not matter if you and your partner have

different sets of values. According to Galician, participants in her research who cite differences in lifestyles and values claim it is nothing like the novels or movies where “opposites attract” and “love conquers all” (2004, 194). Galician finds that, “opposites frequently attract – but they don’t stay together very long except in mass media mythology” (2004, 198). In reality, and rarely found in the media, common values are the foundations of lasting romantic relationships (Galician, 2004, 198).

Myths are problematic because they are simply that – myths. They are stories and ideas that generally provide the audience with a rose-colored view of reality. In particular, love myths teach the audience what is “important” in sex, love, and romance, regardless of the distance from reality. Love myths have a way of omitting the realities of everyday life in love, as well as how to sustain love. Instead, myths present ideas and concepts alone, not necessarily the happy endings.

Fairy tales do not deal with the ‘happily ever after’ of old age or even middle age. They do not give advice about how to make love last, or how to maintain love from day to day. The chase is more dramatic than marriage or maintenance, and the details of domestic life are generally considered unworthy of literature, especially in the Western tradition (Sternberg, 1998, 97).

Furthermore, the word romance itself is rooted in myth. As defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, two definitions of romance are: 1. a medieval tale based on legend, chivalric love and adventure, or the supernatural; and 2. something (as an extravagant story or account) that lacks basis in fact. We are taught through our love myths to desire romance, yet the definition of romance is unrealistic in itself. So if we are taught through love myths to desire romance, which implicitly means to set unrealistic desires, since romance itself is unrealistic, what happens when these myths hit

the mainstream media? In relationships, this creates a great deal of “misery, disappointment, and disillusionment” (Crosby, 1991, 20).

The romanticization of love in the media has a long history. The present-day notion of romance, which dates from 12th century ‘courtly love,’ was first disseminated to the masses by troubadours (precursors, in a sense, of modern mass media recording artists) and later by the early chapbooks and romance novels (‘romans’) of the very first mass medium—books (Galician, 2004, 1).

There are realistic depictions of love, sex, and romance in the media, but as Galician asserts, those depictions are few and far between (2004).

WHEN MUSIC & MYTHS COMBINE

When these unrealistic myths are distributed to the masses via different forms of media, the “misery, disappointment, and disillusionment” in relationships translates to big problems in the success of romantic relationships. According to Galician, both unrealistic expectations about coupleship, as well as dissatisfaction in real-life romantic relationships can be attributed to higher usage of certain forms of mass media (2004, 5). In the points that follow, previous literature surrounding these perpetuated myths, as well as literature surrounding music effects specifically relating to love, sex, and romance are discussed. While a number of studies focus on the side of media effects theory, this study serves to analyze the media that is arguably producing these “effects” and the cultivation of specific ideas surrounding romance, love, and sex.

First, these myths about love, sex, and romance speak specifically to relationship expectations and the fulfillment of roles. With marriage traditionally viewed as the ultimate end of a romantic relationship, it is important to first understand previous marriage research. According to Glenn in a study conducted from 1973 to 1994 in which

he followed the marital success and failure in five American 10-year marriages, the reasons for the noticeable deterioration of marital success are unclear. However, and perhaps more importantly, Glenn argues that increased expectations of marriage, conflict over gender roles (including division of household chores), as well as a general decline in the ideal of marriage permanence has increased the likelihood of marriages ending in divorce (Glenn, 1998, 576).

Anne Bader's (2007) research on love myths, music, and marriage also points to unrealistic expectations and unfulfilled roles as a destroyer of marriages. One woman testified to the intense influence music played in her life. Her adolescent life was strongly influenced by music, as she states, "Prior to falling madly in love at 16, I vividly remember listening to songs that spoke of love and wanted desperately to have someone of my own to love me." Through the influence of music, the belief that love would last forever was reinforced to her. It is clear from her testimony that this woman felt an extremely strong connection to music, which according to her, aided in the eventual demise of her marriage. At one point, she told her husband that their relationship was like the song "You Don't Bring Me Flowers Anymore," to which he replied, "I Never Promised You a Rose Garden" (both song titles). In Bader's analysis of popular songs from the decade of the 1960s and 1990s, Bader found that the only thing that has increased is overt sexuality in the lyrics; but love myths remain the same throughout the decades (2007).

Additionally, psychology professor Barry Farber echoes Bader's points regarding the influence of music on relationship expectations.

Too often, we expect our lover to always be there, always take our side, always show a saintly amount of patience, and always yield to our needs: “Hold me when I’m here, love me when I’m wrong, hold me when I’m scared, and love me when I’m gone” (3 Doors Down, “When I’m Gone”). Sure, I’ll do these things all the time—except when I’ve come home exhausted from work, or the baby has kept us up all night, or when the football game is on, or when you’ve taken your mother’s side rather than mine. (2007, 14).

Too often we take lyrics literally and fall under the mythical guise that these songs paint for us, when in reality, music does not paint the whole picture of what a loving relationship looks like, which, according to Sternberg, includes intimacy, passion, and commitment (2006).

Not only does music play a strong role in relationship expectations, but misperceptions regarding particular roles are created, encouraged, and perpetuated. Chia and Gunther (2006) explore how the media may shape college students’ perceptions and own sexual activities via its influence of sexual norms. Their findings show that “perceptions of peer norms may be biased by media content or other factors; those perceptions, at least for men, may actually influence decisions to engage in sexual behaviors” (Chia & Gunther, 2006, 315).

Stephens and Few (2007) focus on the idea of roles, particularly the sexual scripts of women that emerge in African American hip hop. They find eight common highly sexualized female scripts: 1. the Diva; 2. Gold Digger; 3. Freak; 4. Dyke; 5. Gangster Bitch; 6. Sister Savior; 7. Earth Mother; and 8. Baby Mama. In this study, both female and male preadolescents felt it was a fundamental part of their daily lives, that the music taught them things about life (echoing Gerbner’s storyteller concept), and gave them a perspective on their role or position in society.

Regarding hip hop, teen's comments were overflowing with connection and almost reliance on the music. "I love Hip Hop. I love it. I listen to it everyday, all day. When I hear it.... (hitting a beat on table, laughter). I love it. All day long I listen to it" and "It's about us, you know. It's about being in America and how [African American kids] are" (Stephens & Few, 2007, 56).

In addition, visual media has a dramatic effect on gender role expectations, as shown by the words of a young male about a hip hop music video. "[Hip Hop artist] Snoop is a pimp. You see all 'dem girls he's got going off on him in [the music video]. You saw that video? Those girls were all over him... freaks all over him. Yeah, Snoop ran all that" (Stephens & Few, 2007, 56).

Sexual music has profound effects on adolescent behavior (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2009; Martino, Collins, Strachman, Kanouse, & Berry, 2006; Primak, Douglas, Fine, & Dalton, 2009; Ter Bogt, Engels, Bogers, & Kloosterman, 2010). In particular, music videos play a role in sexualizing adolescents (Frison, Vandenberg, Trekels, & Eggermont, 2015; Van Oosten, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2015). Furthermore, in keeping with music videos, although not focusing on adolescents specifically, Aubrey and Frisby (2011) found that female artists were more sexually objectified and sexual objectification was more prevalent in R&B, Hip-Hop, and Pop music videos more than country music videos.

While specific genres play a role in sexual objectification, lyrical content also varies by genre. From a study of the most popular songs from 1958-1998, researchers examined the lyrical content for concepts of love, sex, and hurt. The authors found a relationship between love songs and genre. According to the study, R&B contained the

highest percentage of love songs, clocking in at 96%, followed by rock-and-roll with 82%, and rap/hip-hop with 59% (Dukes, et al., 2003, 646).

There is little to no research on the rock and country genres as they pertain to love and sex. Generally speaking, country music is considered a “safe” genre compared to R&B, rap, and pop due to the virtual lack of “offensive” or “mature” lyrics in country music (Primack, Gold, Schwarz, & Dalton, 2008). However, one country-centered study focused on the time period of 1994-2013 found that country music has increased the use of sexualized lyrics (Evans, 2014, 31). Clearly, more research needs to be done surrounding love, sex, and romance in this genre. Will love myths be more present in such inherently misogynistic genres (rap, hip-hip) in comparison to a more “traditional” genre? Or will we find that this “safe” genre is not so “safe” at all?

Previous research also shows that artist gender plays a role in lyrical content. According to Dukes et al., songs performed by women contained more love lyrics than songs performed by men (2003, 647). However, the average of love lyrics performed by female artists actually dropped throughout 1958-1998, while love lyrics performed by men actually increased (just not significantly) (Dukes, et al., 2003, 647). Similar to love words in lyrics, women also scored higher in using sex words in lyrics. According to the study, women scored twice as high in the use of sex words per line (Dukes, et al., 2003, 647). Of importance to note, men consistently increased their use of sex words in lyrics throughout the time period, while women actually used fewer sex words in their more current songs (Dukes, et al., 2003, 647).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study is designed to reveal the ways love is constructed through myths within popular music genres and its frequency across genres over a 20-year time period and the research questions follow this paragraph. It uses content analysis to explore themes associated with love myths in popular music lyrics. I am interested in exploring whether there is an increase in love myths in certain genres, given that country music is considered a more “traditional genre” and rap music is considered such a misogynistic genre, in comparison to other genres. Aside from studying the frequency of love myths, my main interest is to uncover which particular myths are the most highly represented in general and within certain genres across the 1990s and 2010s. Understanding what myths are most common in popular music is important in order to avoid the cultivation of unrealistic expectations and ideals.

The research questions that guide this study are:

RQ1: How frequently do love myths occur in each genre?

RQ2: Which myths are most represented?

RQ3: How have the genres and myths changed over time?

RQ4: Which vocalist gender represents the most myths?

CHAPTER 3

METHODS: CONTENT ANALYSIS

Using Galician's (2004) 12 Major Mass Media Myths as the principal framework, I conducted a content analysis of the lyrics of a selected set sample of songs from five different genres, between a 20-year period, examining them for messages about love, sex, and romance. The five genres of music selected were Pop, Hip-Hop/R&B, Rap, Rock, and Country. Sampling only the most popular songs ensured that the music had reached a substantial portion of the population.

Out of Galician's 12 love myths, only 10 will be used to code the songs in this study. Myth 11 addresses the idea that the actors and actresses are similar to the romantic characters they play. Since this study does not address the artists or groups outside of the lyrics themselves, there would be no context to code that myth. Additionally, myth number 12 is the idea that because media portrayals aren't "real," they don't affect consumers. Because this study focuses on the songs themselves and not the consumers, myth 12 also cannot be assessed.

SAMPLING

According to the most current 10-year Consumer Trends comparison (1998-2008) created by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), Rock, Rap/Hip-Hop, R&B/Urban, Country, and Pop are the most purchased genre of music (RIAA). The annual consumer profile chart contains a music consumer trends comparison in which data on music genre, format, and purchasing information can be evaluated and understood. For the purposes of this study, I analyzed 250 songs from every genre

selected, released over two periods of five years (1991-1995) and (2011-2015), in order to accumulate an extensive assessment of each specific genre's overall expression. The 25 most popular songs from each year were chosen because they are the most played and listened to, and therefore also have the highest chance of being influential on their listeners, aligning with Gerbner's view on repetition in cultivation theory. The top songs from each genre and each year are compiled by the Billboard Charts based on a variety of factors such as sales, streaming, and radio play, and are calculated using custom formulas. When year-end charts were unavailable, songs were supplemented by weekly charts for that same year.

Due to the fact that the Billboard Charts and the Recording Industry Association of America are separate entities, they also have different classifications and groupings for music genres. While the RIAA groups Rap and Hip-Hop together, the Billboard Charts classify Rap separately and group Hip-Hop and R&B together, so that is how they are grouped in this study.

CODING SCHEME

After collecting my sample of songs, I used three lyric websites (Google Play, elyrics.net, and lyrics.com) to find the corresponding lyrics of each song. All song lyrics were accessed from Google Play, elyrics.net, and lyrics.com between February 1 and July 15, 2016. Two coders were used to complete the content analysis. Using Microsoft Excel, we coded the lyrics from each genre in separate spreadsheets. To examine sex, love, and romance myths in Pop, Hip-Hop/R&B, Rap, Rock, and Country music, we

conducted a content analysis of the most popular songs. Since the focus of this study is the content of the songs, content analysis was the best tool to use.

To determine intercoder reliability, sample songs from 2008 were coded. The author and an independent researcher independently coded a subset (10% of the sample songs). Coders were given a coding manual, which included detailed definitions and examples of each coding category. Any differences in coding the sample set were discussed and resulted in adjusting the coding manual and retesting for reliability. This process was repeated multiple times until a satisfactory intercoder reliability was achieved and the coding manual was wide-ranging and extensive to account for any vague or complicated lyrics.

The two coders' results were compared, and Cohen's kappa was calculated. A satisfactory kappa (.72) was acquired for coding love myths, indicating a substantial consensus for reliability of the study ($\kappa \geq .61$), according to the Landis and Koch framework (Landis & Koch, 1977, 165).

Aligning with Bader's study, the following coding question was addressed: Were any of Galician's myths present in the lyrics? For my sample, we content coded songs that had phrases and themes related to the following ten Galician love myths: (1) "partner predestination," (2) "love at first sight," (3) "expression unnecessary," (4) "sexual perfection," (5) "model women," (6) "real men," (7) "beast to prince," (8) "fighting equals passion," (9) "opposite values," and (10) "incomplete without a mate." Any reference to a myth in the lyrics, whether in one single line or throughout the song was coded as myth. Songs were coded for every myth represented in the lyrics, so each song had the ability to be coded for 0-10 myths.

“Partner predestination” was coded when the lyrics contained the idea that your perfect partner is cosmically predestined, so nothing/nobody can separate you. “I’m Yours” by Jason Mraz (2008) is an example from the sample coding that nothing will stop lovers from uniting: “And nothing's going to stop me but divine intervention” and “This is our fate, I’m yours.”

“Love at first sight” was coded when the lyrics contained the idea about falling in love immediately or knowing right away that you’ve found the one. References to seeing someone for the first time, first look, first sound, etc. are all coded in this category. Kylie Minogue’s 2002 hit “Love at First Sight” encompasses this myth with lyrics like, “It was love at first sight,” and “Cause baby when I heard you/For the first time I knew.”

“Expression unnecessary” was coded when the song message related to the concept that your true partner should know what you’re thinking or feeling (without your having to tell). There are two categories that fall under this myth: mindreading and cluelessness, both unproductive communication styles that target the theme of myth 3. Natasha Bedingfield hits the nail on the head with her song “Soulmate” by using the lyric, “Who knows how to love you without being told.”

“Sexual perfection” was coded when the lyrics conveyed the idea that if your partner is truly meant for you, sex is easy and wonderful. Sexual lyrics also include words like lay and references to the body. Ciara’s 2009 hit featuring Justin Timberlake illustrates this myth in action, promoting the concept that when you’re with the one you love, sex is magical. The chorus echoes this sentiment, “Cause you know that I can make you believe/In love and sex and magic.”

“Model women” was coded when lyrics made references to women’s bodies’ need to be perfect. This is based on myth #5, which is to attract and keep a man, a woman should look like a model. For example, in *Right Round* (2008) Flo Rida sings,

She's amazin', fire blazin'/Hotter than Cajun, girl won't you move a lil'
closer?/Time to get paid, it's maximum wage/That body belong on a poster/You
spin my head right round, right round.

“Real men” was coded when the song message contained any of the following ideas in regards to men: the man should not be shorter, weaker, younger, poorer, or less successful than the woman. Flo Rida’s lyrics in 2008 certainly echo these sentiments about money and provide a good example of this myth:

Hey, walk out that house with my swagger/Hop in there with dough, I got places
to go!/Hey, shawty must know I'm the man/My money love her like her number
one fan/Don't open my mouth, let her talk to my fans/My Benjamin Franklins/A
couple of grands, I got rubber bands/My paper planes makin' her dance/But I'm
king of the club and I'm wearin' the crown.

Here, money and sex are both objects that the singer owns and does what he wishes with as a self-proclaimed “king.”

“Beast to prince” was coded when the lyrics conveyed the concept that the love of a woman can change a man from a “beast” into a “prince.” Anytime a song presents the idea that a man needs a woman to change him, a man chooses to change for a woman, or a woman has the ability, desire, or need to change a man gets coded in this category. Country artist Chris Young’s song “The Man I Want to Be” exemplifies this myth category because it is about a man praying to change into the man his woman wants.

“Fighting equals passion” was coded when the song depicted ideas about the importance or meaning of fighting in a relationship. The idea that bickering and fighting a lot mean that a man and a woman really love each other passionately. Celine Dion’s

1997 song “I Hate You Then I Love you” is a prime example of this myth. To describe her partner and relationship she uses phrases like, “I’d like to run away from you,” “I hate you,” “You make me mad,” “You treat me wrong,” and “You bring me down,” but ultimately believes that she does not want to be in love with anyone else.

“Opposite values” was coded when the songs included the idea that all you really need is love, so it doesn’t matter if you and your lover have very different values. Anytime a song contains the idea surrounding opposites attracting or being very different from one another they are coded to this category. Kelly Clarkson’s 2009 hit “My Life Would Suck Without You” features this myth when she refers to the relationship being “dysfunctional,” and the couple being “messed up” and “having issues,” yet they “belong together.”

“Incomplete without a mate” was coded when the lyrics portrayed the idea that the right mate “completes you,” filling your needs and making your dreams come true. Taylor Swift’s *Love Story* clearly portrays myth number ten, filled with lyrics like, “But you were everything to me,” and “Romeo save me I’ve been feeling so alone.” Anytime a song depicts the idea of needing to be rescued or that love has the power to fulfill you, this myth was coded.

In order to code artist gender, each song was listened to once through. Within this category was male, female, and both. Depending on who sang the majority of the song and who was just featured (if anyone) determined the code. For example, the song *One Love* by Macklemore featuring Mary Lambert would be coded male in the primary category (Macklemore). For songs that are primarily sung by groups or bands featuring both genders, the option “both” was used.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

MYTH FREQUENCY

RQ1: How frequently do love myths occur in each genre?

For the combination of the time periods analyzed, the results of a frequency test show that love myths occur most often in Hip Hop/R&B songs, with an average score of 1.05 myths per song. There was model significance for the ANOVA, $F(4,1160) = 29.26$, $p = .00$, indicating at least one significant difference among the means. Scheffé post hoc comparisons showed that love myths were higher in the Hip Hop-R&B music ($M = 1.05$) than Country ($M = .64$, $p = .00$), Pop ($M = .69$, $p = .00$), and Rock ($M = .27$, $p = .00$). There was no significant difference between Hip Hop/R&B and Rap ($M = .98$, $p = .96$).

In the 1990s, the results of a frequency test show that love myths occur most often in Hip hop/R&B songs, with an average score of 1.02 myths per song. There was model significance for the ANOVA, $F(4,535) = 11.12$, $p = .00$, indicating at least one significant difference among the means. Scheffé post hoc comparisons showed that love myths in Rock ($M = .24$) are significantly lower than all of the other genres studied: Country ($M = .66$, $p = .02$), Hip Hop/R&B ($M = 1.02$, $p = .00$), Pop ($M = .72$, $p = .01$), and Rap ($M = .85$, $p = .00$).

In the 2010s, the results of a frequency test show that love myths occur most often in Rap songs, with an average score of 1.09 myths per song, followed closely by Hip Hop/R&B (1.08 myths per song). There was model significance for the ANOVA, $F(4,620) = 19.74$, $p = .00$, indicating at least one significant difference among the means. Scheffé post hoc comparisons showed that love myths were higher in both Rap ($M =$

1.09) and Hip Hop-R&B ($M = 1.08$) than Country ($M = .62$, $p = .00$), Pop ($M = .66$, $p = .00$), and Rock ($M = .30$, $p = .00$). There was no significant difference between Hip Hop/R&B and Rap. Table 1 provides a full comparison of average myths per genre by year.

Table 1. Average number of myths per song by genre and year.

GENRE	1990s	2010s	TOTAL
Country	.66	.62	.64
Hip Hop/R&B	1.02	1.08	1.05
Pop	.72	.66	.69
Rap	.85	1.09	.98
Rock	.24	.30	.27

MYTH REPRESENTATION

RQ2: Which myths are most represented?

The most well-represented myth overall in the two periods combined is myth #10: “incomplete without a mate,” as 19.1% of songs ($n = 1,170$) contained this myth. “Partner predestination” and “model woman” were both found in 10.4% of songs. See Figure 1 for the complete breakdown of myth percentages.

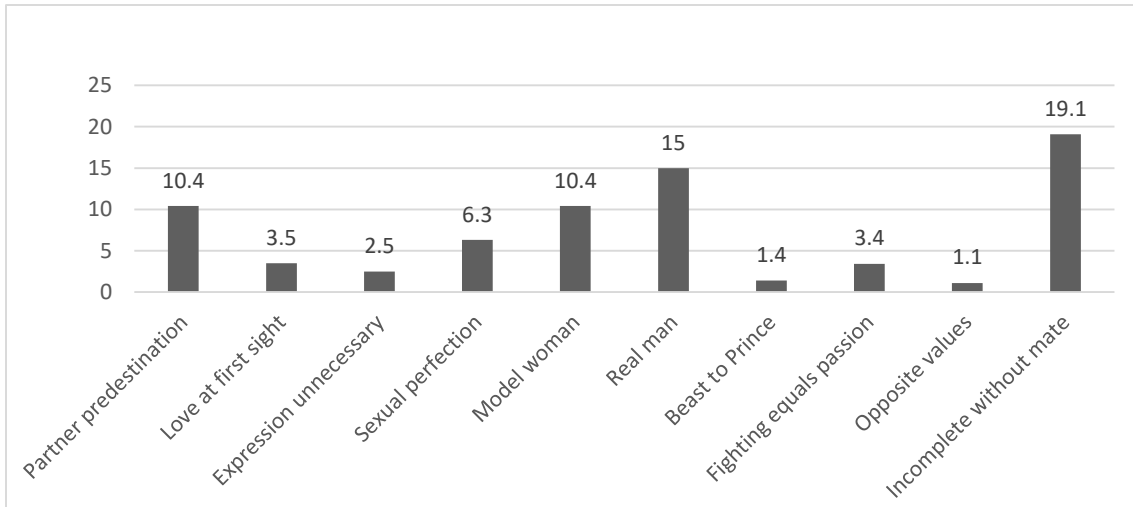


Figure 1. Percentage of myths in all years studied.

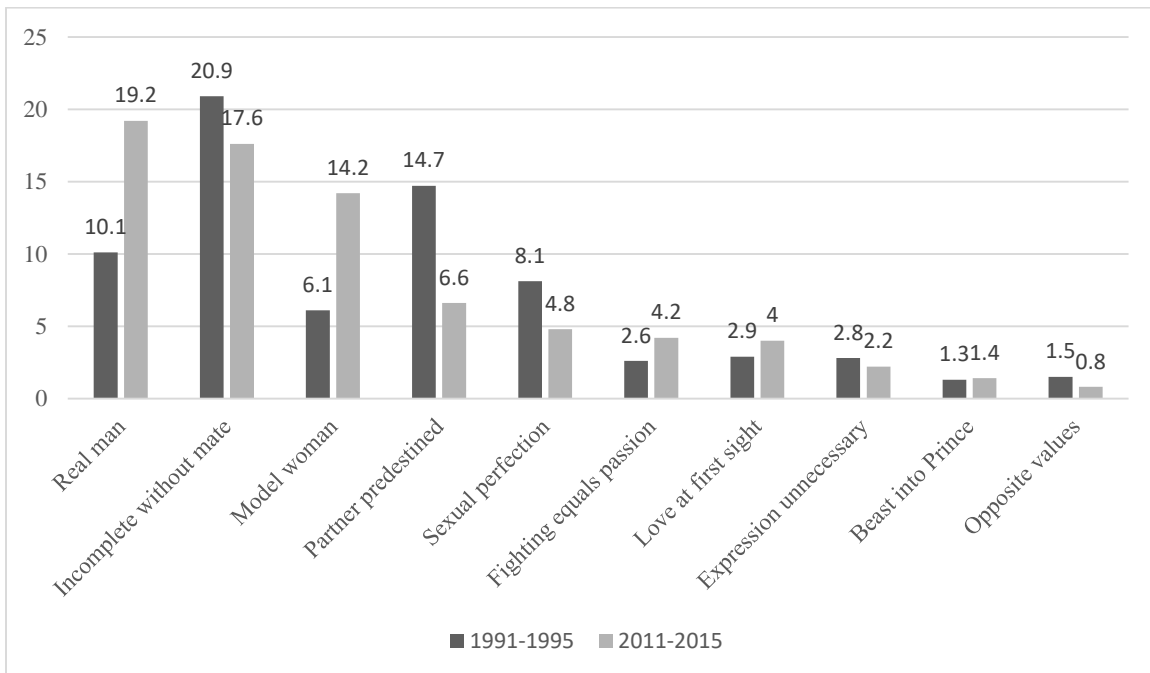


Figure 2. Percentage of myth by year. Organized in descending order for 2011-2015.

In popular music from 1991-1995, all of the myths were found in songs, though the myth “incomplete without a mate” was found most often (20.9%; $n = 545$), followed by the myth “partner predestination” (14.7%). “Incomplete without a mate” (17.6%; $n = 625$) was only the second most popular myth in popular music from 2011-2015, with the

myth of a “real man” scoring at number one with 19.2%. See Figure 2 for a complete breakdown of songs by percentage.

A breakdown of the most common myths by genre is as follows: In 1990s Country, partner predestination was found in 14.4% of songs and incomplete without a mate in 16.8% of songs. In 2010s Country, the highest ranking myth was incomplete without a mate (16%). Table 2 provides a summary of Country results.

Table 2. Percentage of myth by year in Country music. Ranked in descending order for the 2010s.

MYTH	1990s	2010s
Incomplete without mate	16.8%	16%
Model woman	5.6%	12%
Love at first sight	4.8%	8.8%
Sexual perfection	2.4%	6.4%
Partner predestination	14.4%	4.0%
Real man	6.4%	4.0%
Fighting equals passion	4.0%	4.0%
Beast into Prince	2.4%	2.4%
Opposite values	1.6%	2.4%
Expression unnecessary	7.2%	1.6%

In Hip Hop/R&B of the 1990s, “incomplete without a mate” and “partner predestination” were the top myths. However, in Hip Hop/R&B music of the 2010s, neither of those myths made the top two. Instead, “model woman” and “real man” were the most popular myths during that time period. Table 3 lists Hip Hop/R&B results.

Table 3. Percentage of myth by year in Hip Hop/R&B music. Ranked in descending order for the 2010s.

MYTH	1990s	2010s
Real man	10.4%	36.0%
Model woman	7.2%	25.6%
Incomplete without mate	34.4%	20.8%
Sexual perfection	19.2%	7.2%
Partner predestination	22.4%	7.2%
Fighting equals passion	0.8%	4.0%
Expression unnecessary	2.4%	4.0%
Love at first sight	2.4%	2.4%
Beast into Prince	1.6%	0.8%
Opposite values	0.8%	0%

In 1990s Pop, “incomplete without a mate” and “partner predestination” were the top myths per song. In 2010s Pop, the highest ranking myth was “incomplete without a mate.” Table 4 has the complete ranking.

Table 4. Percentage of myth by year in Pop music. Ranked in descending order for the 2010s.

MYTH	1990s	2010s
Incomplete without mate	31.2%	22.4%
Model woman	0.0%	12.5%
Partner predestination	23.9%	10.4%
Real man	3.4%	7.2%
Fighting equals passion	3.4%	6.4%
Sexual perfection	4.5%	5.6%
Love at first sight	2.3%	4.8%
Beast into Prince	1.1%	1.6%
Expression unnecessary	1.1%	0.0%
Opposite values	4.5%	0.0%

In Rap of the 1990s and 2010s, the highest ranking myth was “real man.” Additionally, “model woman” ranked fairly high in Rap of the 2010s. For reference, see Table 5.

Table 5. Percentage of myth by year in Rap music. Ranked in descending order for the 2010s.

MYTH	1990s	2010s
Real man	29%	48.8%
Model woman	17%	25.6%
Sexual perfection	12%	4.8%
Fighting equals passion	2%	4%
Incomplete without mate	10%	3.6%
Partner predestination	9%	3.2%
Expression unnecessary	1%	3.2%
Love at first sight	4%	3.2%
Beast into Prince	0.0%	1.6%
Opposite values	1%	0.8%

In 1990s and 2010s Rock, the highest ranking myth was “incomplete without a mate.” Table 6 provides a complete breakdown.

Table 6. Percentage of myth by year in Rock music. Ranked in descending order for the 2010s.

MYTH	1990s	2010s
Incomplete without mate	10.8%	15.2%
Partner predestination	3.9%	8.0%
Fighting equals passion	2.9%	2.4%
Expression unnecessary	1.0%	2.4%
Love at first sight	1.0%	0.8%
Beast into Prince	1.0%	0.8%
Opposite values	0.0%	0.8%
Real man	2.0%	0.0%
Model woman	0.0%	0.0%
Sexual perfection	1.0%	0.0%

CHANGES IN MYTH OVER TIME

RQ3: How have the genres and myths present changed over time?

The overall difference in the average number of love myths found in popular music between the 1990s and 2010s is not statistically significant. An independent samples t-test Sig. (2-tailed) is .405. Based on the amount of myths per song, there was

an average of .7056 myths per song in the 1990s and an average of .7504 myths per song in the 2010s. Taken as a whole, these results suggest that popular music has not changed significantly the amount of love myths present over time.

Independent-samples t-tests were conducted to compare the average number of love myths in each genre during the 1990s and 2010s. There were no significant differences found between time periods for any of the popular music genres. Table 7 shows the results of the tests. These results suggest that each individual genre has not changed in terms of the amount of love myths present over the 20-year time period.

Table 7. Changes in love myths by genre over time.

GENRE	YEAR	MEAN	Std. Deviation	t	N	Sig
Country	1990s	.66	.85	.38	250	.70
	2010s	.62	.80			
Hip Hop/R&B	1990s	1.02	1.00	.52	250	.60
	2010s	1.08	.93			
Pop	1990s	.72	.82	.45	213	.65
	2010s	.66	.84			
Rap	1990s	.85	1.23	-1.60	225	.11
	2010s	1.09	1.00			
Rock	1990s	.24	.47	-.98	227	.33
	2010s	.30	.57			

However, Chi-Square analysis was used to determine specific myths that may have changed in each individual genre over time. Frequencies of songs with a given myth were tested between the two time periods. For example, in Country music, the 1990s had significantly more songs that contained the myth “expression is unnecessary.” The Chi-Square value of 4.66 is reported as significant at $p = .03$. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between country music of the 1990s and 2010s when it comes to representing the myth that “expression is unnecessary.” Additionally,

the myth that your partner is predestined for you also changed from the 1990s to 2010s in Country. The Chi-Square value of 8.09 is reported as significant at $p = .004$. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between country music of the 1990s and 2010s when it comes to representing the myth that your partner is predestined for you. The 1990s had more songs that contained this myth.

Multiple myths have also changed over time in Hip Hop/R&B. The 1990s had more songs that contained the myth that you are incomplete without a mate. The Chi-Square value of 5.79 is reported as significant at $p = .02$. This means that there is a statistically significant difference between hip hop music of the 1990s and 2010s. Additionally, the 1990s also had more significantly more songs that contained the myths your partner is predestined (Chi-Square value of 11.45 is reported as significant at $p = .001$) and sexual perfection (Chi-Square value of 7.86 is reported as significant at $p = .01$). However, the 2010s had more songs that contained the myths of a “model woman” (Continuity Correction value of 14.121 is reported as significant at $p = .000$) and a “real man” (Continuity Correction value of 21.574 is reported as significant at $p = .000$).

For Pop music, the 1990s had more songs that contained the myths of partner predestination (Chi-Square value of 6.98 is reported as significant at $p = .01$) and opposite values (Chi-Square value of 5.48 is reported as significant at $p = .02$). Conversely, the Chi-Square value of 7.80 is reported as significant at $p = .01$ for the myth of a model woman. The 2010s had more songs that contained this myth.

In Rap music, the 1990s had more songs that contained the myth of sexual perfection (Chi-Square value of 3.91 is reported as significant at $p = .05$). But in the

2010s, Rap had more songs that contained the myth of a real man (Chi-Square value of 9.08 is reported as significant at $p = .00$).

There were no significant differences in myths between popular Rock music of the 1990s and 2010s.

GENDER & MYTH

RQ4: Which vocalist gender represents the most myths?

Over the course of the study, 912 songs (78%) were by male vocalists, 235 songs were by female vocalists (20.1%), and 22 songs were by both male and female vocalists. Figure 3 illustrates the results. An analysis of variance showed that there is a significant relationship between gender and myth during all of the years of the study, $F(2, 1161) = 5.30$, $p = .01$. Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé test indicated that the average myths were significantly higher in songs that featured both female and male vocalists ($M = 1.18$, $SD = 1.33$) than in the comparison to female songs ($M = .60$, $SD = .78$). No significant difference was reported in male only songs. These results suggest that songs that featured both male and female gender on vocals had an effect on the amount of myths represented, specifically in comparison to songs by only female vocalists.

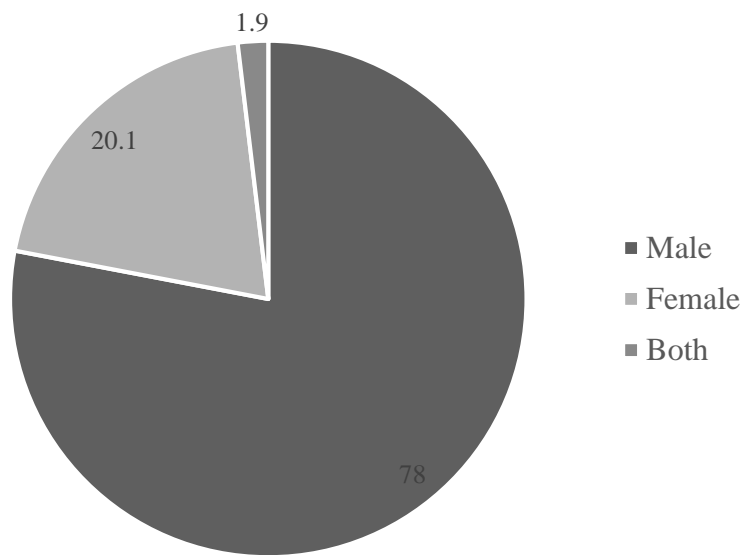


Figure 3. Overall percentage of songs by gender in all years studied.

Popular music between 1991-1995 was primarily by male vocalists (76.5%), followed by female vocalists (22%), and lastly both female and male vocalists (1.5%), as shown in Figure 4. An analysis of variance showed that the effect of gender in the 1990s was significant, $F(2,537) = 5.07$, $p = .01$. Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance indicated that the average myths were significantly higher in male/female duet songs ($M = 1.75$, $SD = 2.05$) than in the other two conditions: male vocalist ($M = .70$, $SD = .95$) and female vocalist ($M = .67$, $SD = .80$). These results suggest that in comparison to songs solely by female or male artists, there are more love myths found in music that features both male and female vocals. Figure 6 illustrates the means of vocalist gender over time.

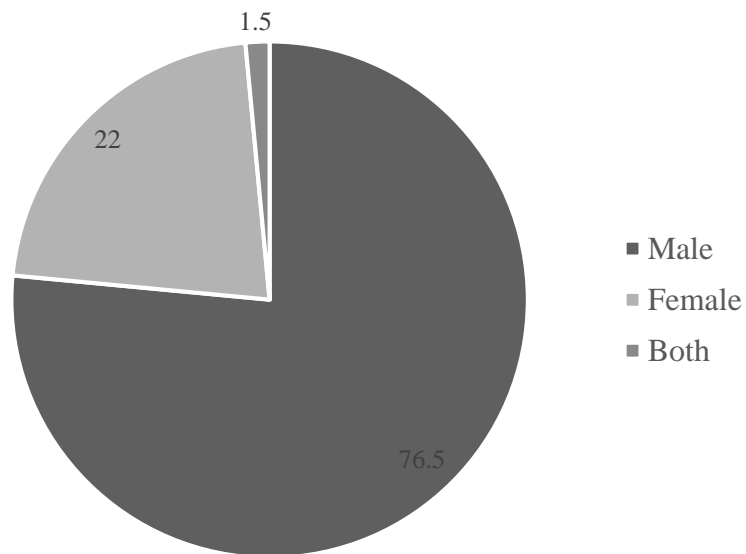


Figure 4. Percentage of songs by gender in the 1990s.

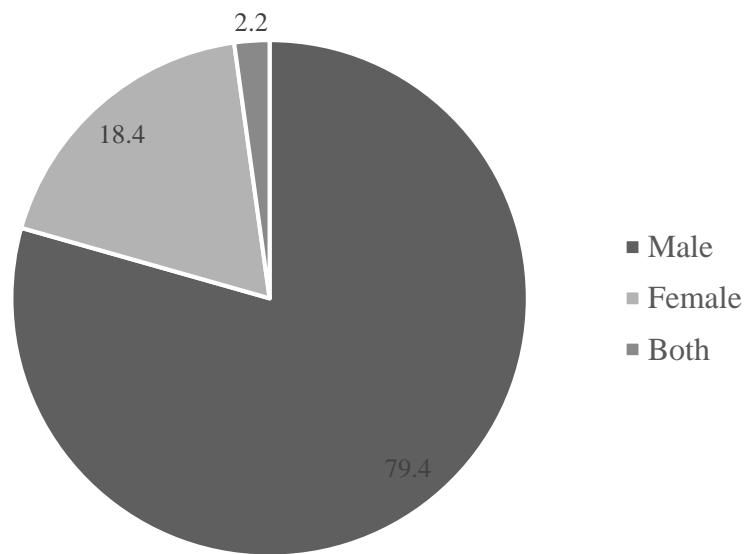
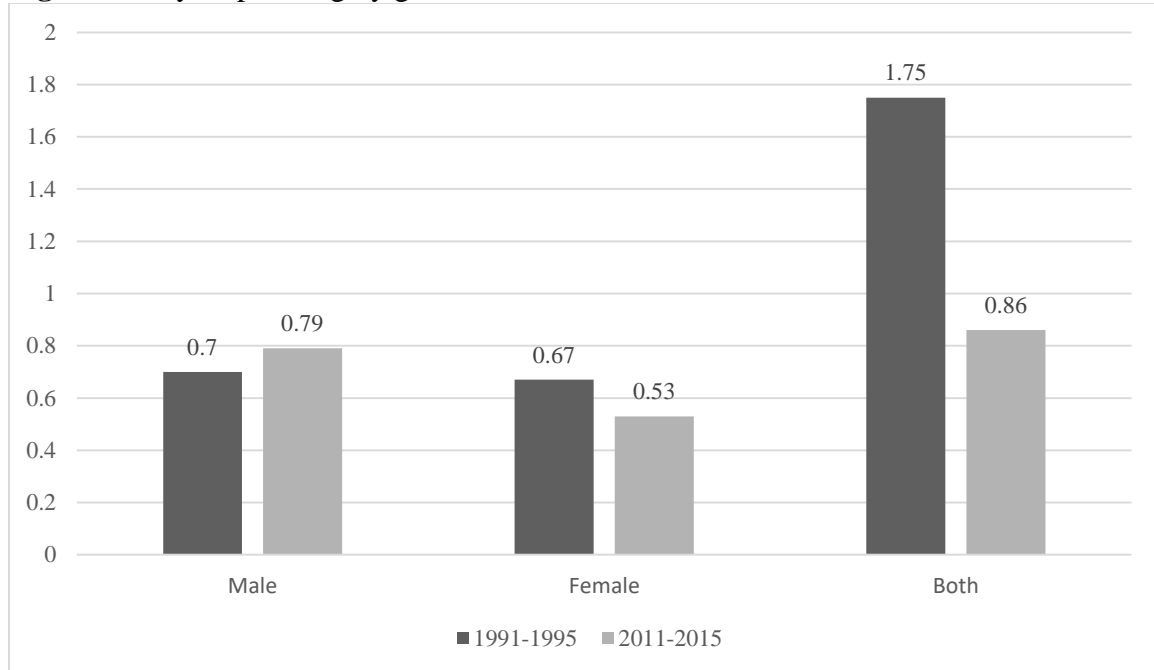


Figure 5. Percentage of songs by gender in the 2010s.

From 2011-2015, popular music vocalist genders were as follows: 496 songs (79.4%) by male vocalists, 115 songs (18.4%) by female vocalists, and 14 songs (2.2%) featured both male and female genders, as shown in Figure 5. An analysis of variance showed that the relationship of gender to myths in 2010s was significant, $F(2,621) = 4.28$, $p = .01$. Post hoc analyses using the Scheffé post hoc criterion for significance

indicated that the average myths were significantly higher in male songs ($M = .79$, $SD = .91$) than in the comparison to female songs ($M = .53$, $SD = .76$). These results suggest that in the most recent years of study, popular music sung by male artists feature a significantly larger amount of myths than female artists.

Figure 6. Myths per song by gender over time.



CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The results of the study suggest that there are no statistically significant changes in the overall average of love myths found in popular music genres between 1991-1995 and 2011-2015. Despite the cultural shifts, technological advances, and industry changes between the two time periods, the love myths represented in popular music remain steady. This is consistent with prior research on love myths in music, in which Bader's (2007) research also found no longitudinal change in love myths over time. Bader analyzed popular music from the decades of the 1960s and 1990s. These findings indicate that Galician's love myths are represented throughout popular music on a consistent basis.

While there has been no shift in love myths over time, there has been a shift in the sexual explicitness of lyrics over time, according to both Bader and Ackerman (Ackerman, 2004; Bader, 2007). These findings suggest that if the love myths have not changed, but music has become more sexually explicit, then perhaps the way these myths are described has changed, as well. While the myth itself may have staying power, the way it is described may shift with the culture.

A critical piece of the cultivation process, according to Gerbner, is exposure (Morgan et al., 2009, 35). We also know from previous research that exposure to music has the potential to influence behavior, identity, and expectations (Chia & Gunther, 2006; Stephens & Few, 2007; Martino, et. al, 2006; Primak, et. al, 2009; Ter Bogt, et. al, 2010). Due to the consistency of love myths in popular music and music available at our fingertips now more than even before, hearing Galician's love myths repeatedly in

popular music can potentially cultivate unrealistic ideas and expectations in romantic and sexual relationships. These findings show that the future of love and relationships are likely to remain influenced by the consistent repetition of love myths.

Hip Hop/R&B contain more love myths than other genres, which is consistent with prior research that concluded Hip Hop/R&B contained the highest percentage of love songs (Dukes, et al., 2003). In both Rap and Hip Hop/R&B of the 2010s, the two highest myths were “model woman” and “real man,” which is consistent with previous research regarding relationship roles (Stephens & Few, 2007).

Although the average of myths in Hip Hop/R&B throughout the 1990s and 2010s remained consistent, the content of myths differed significantly, which may indicate a shift in popular culture and music. The top myths in the 1990s were “incomplete without a mate” and “partner predestination,” however, the top myths in the 2010s were “model woman” and “real man.” According to Galician, both “incomplete without a mate” and “partner predestination” have similar roots in Greek mythology, portraying the idea that there is one perfect partner for you and that perfect partner will complete you (Galician, 2004). Additionally, “model woman” and “real man” also relate to one another, but in the sense of individual identification and gender roles. The “model woman” myth relates specifically to the expectation of women to look perfect and the “real man” myth targets the expectation that men must be taller, stronger, more successful, and richer than their mate. While all myths were found in both time periods, the shift of most common myths from this idea of “we’re perfect together” to “what can you do/be for me” attitude suggests there has been a shift in Hip Hop/R&B music resulting in more objectifying and individualistic lyrics.

Another important finding in regards to changes in genre is the results of love myths in rock music. Based off of previous research, from a study of the most popular songs from 1958-1998, researchers found that rock-and-roll contained the second highest percentage of love songs, with 82% (Dukes, et al., 2003, 646). However, the results of this study show that out of the five most popular music genres studied, rock music contained the least amount of myths per song, averaging .27 myths per song throughout the time periods analyzed, with .24 myths per song in the 1990s and .30 myths per song in the 2010s. These results suggest that rock music may either be presenting healthy and realistic examples of love or that rock music is presenting love myths that do not fall under the categories of Galician's myths.

In regards to vocalist gender, this study found that popular music during 2011-2015 had significantly more love myths present for male vocalists than female vocalists. This is an interesting finding since previous research on songs between 1958 and 1998 has shown that songs performed by women contained both more love lyrics and sex words than songs performed by men (Dukes et al., 2003). This difference suggests that there may be a societal shift in popular culture, as well as male vocalists. Are men simply more comfortable singing about love than ever before? Are men more interested in love and relationships now? Could there be an advantageous compensation for singing about love (money, fame, endorsements)?

Perhaps more importantly, this significant difference in love myths and vocalist gender is not entirely due to men singing more about love myths over time (.70 to .79 myths per song), but also women singing less about love myths over time (.67 to .53 myths per song). Has there been a shift in popular culture from the 1990s to the 2010s

that is promoting more independent women, thus avoiding love myths that focus on the need for another human being to complete you, rescue you, take care of you, know your every need, and so on?

LIMITATIONS

I acknowledge that there is a much broader context than simply lyrics or musical merit regarding how certain songs become popular. There is a deeper background based on politics, money, celebrity, entertainment value, associated dances, et cetera which sends music to the hit charts. Likewise, I know that marketing plays a critical role in what kinds of music listeners hear at all (Bonds, 2006, 528). Furthermore, since there are a plethora of free and/or illegal sites to access music (YouTube, Spotify, Google Play, Amazon, etc.), these songs may not represent the exact popular consumption or preferences, even though they are considered the most “popular” by Billboard standards.

Second, it is important to note that romantic love is historically represented between a man and a woman. While this study is purposeful in not addressing gender and sexuality, some of Galician’s love myths may be limited to only heterosexual couples. Moreover, polyamorous and asexual identities are also not addressed, as monogamy serves as the basis for romantic relationships in this study.

Lastly, this study serves as a starting point to understanding what myths and messages are constantly and consistently being looped in our minds over the airwaves. This study does not serve to show *how* those messages affect the listener.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Myths are challenging because they provide the audience with an unrealistic interpretation of the world. In regards to love, they tell us, and teach us, what is “important” in sex, love, and romance, despite reality.

This study has identified love myths for 1,170 songs between the years of 1991-1995 and 2011-2015 in the most popular music genres: Country, Hip Hop/R&B, Pop, Rap, and Rock. With music serving as storyteller, socializing society’s norms, values, and expectations, it is critical that we understand what messages are being played. This study offers an evaluation of representations of love across five of the most popular music genres. Due to the accessibility, amount, and pervasiveness of music, it is important to understand the potential effects it has on our expectations and relationships.

FURTHER RESEARCH AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study focuses on unhealthy and unrealistic love myths in popular music. Conversely, it would be interesting to contrast these present findings with any healthy or realistic depictions of love in popular music over both genre and time. Furthermore, Galician’s love myths are not an exhaustive list of every love myth represented in the media. Further research is needed to code other unrealistic portrayals of love across time.

While this study has shown that myths have consistency over time, the way the myths are described may shift with the culture, and would therefore be another facet in need of further analysis. Is it possible to code the language itself rather than the myth? If

we coded popular music for explicitness of language, could we possibly find a longitudinal difference?

In keeping with language, another suggestion is to examine the intensity of myths in a given song. For example, is a song that contains many love myths or a song that heavily repeats a myth going to influence listeners more than a song that mentions only one myth in passing? This study coded love myths anytime they were represented in a song, but it would also be valuable to note any changes in the number of myths per song versus the intensity of a given myth per song.

Lastly, further research is needed to establish any significant effect of these love myths on actual relationships and expectations. This study has served as a starting point of what types and amounts of love myths popular music is perpetuating, but additional investigation is needed to establish any relationship of effect. It is important to continue the study of love myths in popular music over time and to examine the impact of love myths in popular music on human behavior.

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